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FOLLOWING DACCA 0863 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ISLAMABAD NEW DELHI
FEB 26TH.

QUOTE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN, PK

SUBJECT: PAK-BANGALEE RECONCILIATION

SUMMARY: THE NEWS FEB 22 OF PAK RECOGNITION AND ACCOUNTS OF MUJIB'S RECEPTION IN LAHORE THE NEXT DAY SPREAD RAPIDLY THROUGH DACCA AND THE COUNTRY. AMONG BANGLADESH'S NEAR 90 PERCENT MUSLIM MAJORITY THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED WITH RELIEF AND JOY, OCCASIONALLY VERGING ON HYSTERICAL DELIGHT. THE RECONCILIATION HAS TEMPORARILY AT LEAST SHORED UP MUJIB'S BATTERED IMAGE AND PRESTIGE. MOST BANGALEES BELIEVE THEIR COUNTRY IS ON A NEW TRACK. HOWEVER, RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES WITH PAKISTAN WILL NOT BE RAPID AND IN DUE COURSE HOPES THAT PAKISTAN WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A REAL CHANGE IN THE BANGALEE SITUATION WILL FADE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DACCA PRESS BANNER HEADLINED PAK RECOGNITION AND GAVE DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF MUJIB'S RECEPTION AT THE LAHORE AIRPORT, IN-
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CLUDING HIS HISTORICALLY IRONICAL MEETINGS WITH TIKKA KHAN AND

AZIZ AHMED, AND HIS EMOTIONAL SCENE WITH BHUTTO IN THE SHALAMAR GARDENS. THE NEWS OF RECONCILIATION SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE THROUGHOUT BANGLADESH, AND IN SEVERAL PARTS OF DACCA FIREWORKS CRACKLED. TO THE UNSOPHISTICATED MUSLIM BANGALEE, NO NEWS COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER. VISIONS OF CHEAP AND PLENTIFUL BASMANTI RICE, LOW COST, GOOD QUALITY LUNGIS AND MATCHES AT 15 RATHER THAN 40 PAISA DANCED IN THEIR HEADS. MANY VIEW THE MOVE AS A REASSERTION OF THEIR COUNTRY'S MUSLIM VOCATION AND HOPE THAT FINALLY INDIA'S OVERWHELMING PRESENCE WILL BE CHECKED.

2. MORE SOPHISTICATED BANGALEES SHARE SIMILAR IMMODERATE EXPECTATIONS. PRIMARILY THEY SEE THE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF BANGLADESH'S RELATIONS WITH INDIA. THEY EXPECT PAKISTAN WILL TRY TO RAPIDLY IMPROVE RELATIONS, DEVELOP TRADE AND CULTURAL TIES, AND MOVE TO REESTABLISH A "MUSLIM" PRESENCE ON INDIA'S EASTERN FLANK. THIS, MANY BELIEVE, IS IN BANGALEE INTERESTS. THE COUNTERWEIGHT OF PAKISTAN WILL RELIEVE INDIAN PRESSURE AND PUT BDG RELATIONS MORE ON THE BASIS OF EQUALITY. MOREOVER, SUCH BANGALEES BELIEVE RECONCILIATION WILL HAVE SHORT TERM POSITIVE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES. SAUDI, TURKISH, IRANIAN AND KUWAITI RECOGNITION, WHICH FOLLOWED BHUTTO'S ANNOUNCEMENT, HAVE FUELED THE FIRES OF HOPE THAT BANGLADESH'S MUSLIM BRETHREN WILL BE GENEROUS IN THE PROVISION OF PETROLEUM AND SUBSTANTIAL CREDITS. WE CONCLUDE THESE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EXPECTATIONS ARE AT BEST PREMATURE AND PROBABLY FANCIFUL.

3. IN TERMS OF GREAT POWER RELATIONS, SOPHISTICATED BANGALEES BELIEVE CHINESE RECOGNITION WILL TAKE PLACE SHORTLY AND THAT THE PRC WILL DEVELOP AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL PRESENCE IN BANGLADESH. THE FEB 25 DACCA PAPERS ALL CARRIED REPORTS OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY CHINESE RECOGNITION AND BANGLADESH'S ENTRY INTO THE UNITED NATIONS. WE SUSPECT PEKING WILL HOLD ITS HAND UNTIL AN AGREEMENT ON THE 195 IS FORMAL AND PERHAPS UNTIL THE POW'S ARE ACTUALLY RELEASED. THEY WILL MOVE SLOWLY AND WITH CAUTION THEREAFTER IN DEVELOPING TIES WITH THE SOVIET AND INDIAN-BEHOLDEN BDG.

4. DESPITE THE WARMTH OF THE MUJIB-BHUTTO EMBRACE, A SETTLEMENT WITH PAKISTAN WILL BE SLOW. THOSE BANGALEES CLOSER TO THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT KNOW HOW COMPLEX ARE THE ISSUES OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES OF THE FORMER PAK NATION, NATIONALIZED PROPERTY, AND THE BIHARI PROBLEM. ESPECIALLY BANGALEES WHO HAVE RECENTLY RETURNED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM PAKISTAN KNOW AND ADMIT PAKISTAN HAS QUITE PROFITABLY REDIRECTED TRADE AND REALIZES THE LIMITATIONS OF BANGLADESH'S TEA AND JUTE EXPORTS. IN POLITICAL TERMS, MUJIB'S AND THE BDG'S PERCEPTION OF INDIAN DISQUIET AND RELATIONS WITH INDIA WILL TEMPER THE PACE OF RECONCILIATION. MUJIB WAS CAREFUL PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR LAHORE AND DURING HIS OVERFLIGHT OF INDIA TO ASSURE MME. GANDHI OF THE IMPORTANCE HE PLACES ON TIES WITH INDIA AND TO REASSURE HER PAK RECOGNITION CAME WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS. (THE SOMETIMES AUTHOR-

ITATIVE MORNING NEWS CARRIED INDIAN PRESS STATEMENTS THAT DACCA MAY BE THE SITE OF A TRIPARTITE MEETING.) WE EXPECT MUJIB WILL MOVE CAREFULLY AND SLOWLY IN HIS PURSUIT OF PAK FRIENDSHIP, EVEN THOUGH THIS IS WHAT HE NEEDS AND WANTS.

5. WHATEVER HIS OTHER FAILINGS, AND THEY ARE MANY, MUJIB IS A MASTER IN THE ART OF AMBIGUITY AND BANGALEE POLITICAL MANEUVER. MUJIB, WE REMEMBER, WAS NEVER A DEVOTEE OF BANGLADESH'S INDEPENDENCE, EVEN AS LATE AS MARCH 1971. LIKE HIS MENTOR, H. S. SUHRAWARDY, HE KNEW AN INDEPENDENT EAST BENGAL WOULD BE COMPLETELY OVERSHADOWED BY INDIA. THE EVENTS OF 1971 CHANGED THE SITUATION AND CONFRONTED HIM AND HIS COUNTRY WITH THE FACT OF INDIAN POWER. SOKEEN IS MUJIB'S SENSE OF THE IMMEDIACY OF POWER THAT HE HAS CONSISTENTLY PURSUED A POLICY OF CLOSE OFFICIAL FRIENDSHIP WITH DELHI. AT THE SAME TIME INDIA HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO GROWING, EVEN VIRULENT CRITICISM FROM MANY LEVELS OF BANGALEE SOCIETY AND ITS IMAGE IN BANGLADESH MAY HAVE WORSENERD TO A POINT THAT EVEN DELHI FEELS IT WOULD BE WISER TO LET MUJIB PURSUE A MORE OPENLY INDEPENDENT COURSE. INDIAN SENSITIVITY MAY EXPLAIN WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE SWARAN SINGH'S RESTRAINED POSTURE DURING HIS RECENT DACCA VISIT. WHILE MUJIB HAS NOT ENCOURAGED HIS COUNTRYMEN'S ANTIPATHY TOWARDS INDIA, HE MAY HAVE SEEN THE ADVANTAGES OF GREATER FLEXIBILITY IT OFFERED HIM. HE HAS PROFITED FROM THE PARADOX. HE HAS USED THE OCCASION OF LAHORE TO SERVE THE CAUSE OF HIS DOMESTIC POPULARITY, REASSERTING HIS ISLAMIC CREDENTIALS AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NOSTALGIA FOR PAKISTAN. HE HAS DONE THIS WITHOUT PAYING AN UNDUE PRICE IN HIS RELATIONS WITH INDIA. THE ADVANTAGES ARE PRIMARILY SHORT TERM; BANGLADESH'S PROBLEMS AND THE DILEMMA OF ITS EXTERNAL RELATIONS REMAIN UNCHANGED. MUJIB HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CAPABLE TACTICIAN BUT ONLY TIME WILL TELL IF HE IS AS CAPABLE A STRATEGIST.

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